through the office of the District Magistrate/Superintendent of Police in every state throughout the country. The districts where the number of applications exceeds 10,000 per year will have dedicated District Passport Cells. The forms will be scrutinised and documents checked by the District Passport Cells and then forwarded to the Passport Office who will issue the passports. The scheme has already been launched in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Sikkim and Nagaland.

(b) Since the passport application will be accepted at the district offices and would normally be sent to the concerned passport office along with the clear police verification report, it is envisaged that the time taken to issue a passport will be reduced and a passport could be issued in about 4 to 5 weeks time.

(c) The Government has taken steps to closely monitor the decentralisation scheme to ensure that passport applicants do not face any inconvenience. The present system of submission of applications at Passport Offices would also continue.

Assault on Indians in Durban

1990. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been cases of assault on Indians living in Durban in South Africa;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken any steps to ensure safety of the Indians living there; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.